

Message Text

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PAGE 01 GUATEM 03273 052242Z
ACTION ARA-14

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0492
INFO AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
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USCINCSO QUARRY HTS CZ
DIA WASHDC

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE GUATEMALA 3273

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, PINS, SHUM, GT
SUBJ: PANZOS EPISODE

REF: GUATEMALA 3221

SUMMARY. DEMANDS CONTINUE FOR A THOROUGH INVESTIGATION OF EVENTS RELATED TO THE SO-CALLED "PANZOS MASSACRE." INDICATIONS ARE THAT THE INVESTIGATION THE GOVERNMENT SAYS IT IS PRESENTLY CONDUCTING WILL BE THE ONLY ONE. VARIOUS PRESS-REPORTED "EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS" BY INDIANS AS WELL AS NON-INDIANS LEND SUPPORT TO THE THESIS THAT SOLDIERS OPENED FIRE ONLY AFTER ONE OF THEM WAS SET UPON BY AN IRATE CAMPESINO. VICE PRESIDENT-ELECT VILLAGRAN KRAMER CHARACTERIZED THE PANZOS INCIDENT AS AN "INDIAN UPRISING," AND ASSOCIATED PRESIDENT-ELECT LUCAS WITH KEKCHI ASPIRATIONS. END SUMMARY.

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PAGE 02 GUATEM 03273 052242Z

1. PRESSURES CONTINUE FOR A FULL INVESTIGATION OF THE MILITARY/CAMPESINO CLASH IN PANZOS, ALTA VERAPAZ DEPARTMENT. COL. ARTURO DE LA CRUZ, PRESIDENT LAUGERUD'S CHIEF OF STAFF, WHO HAS BEEN ON THE SCENE IN PANZOS, TOLD A REPORTED JUNE 2 THAT THE GOVERNMENT HOPES TO CLARIFY THOROUGHLY THE CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING THE TRAGEDY. IN LIKE MANNER, MAJOR ARCHILA OF THE

PRESIDENT'S PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICE SAID THE GOVERNMENT WAS CONDUCTING A FULL INVESTIGATION. ARCHILA ADDED THAT HE DID NOT BELIEVE IT NECESSARY TO SET UP A SPECIAL COMMISSION. THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY HAS TRIED INTRODUCING A MOTION IN THE CONGRESS ASKING THAT THE GOVERNMENT CONDUCT A NON-MILITARY INVESTIGATION. CONGRESS, CHARACTERISTICALLY, HAS BEEN UNABLE TO RAISE A QUORUM.

2. MEANWHILE, REPORTERS, WHO WERE FLOWN DOWN TO THE REMOTE AREA JUNE 1 IN MILITARY AIRCRAFT, HAVE FILED STORIES PROVIDING MORE INSIGHT INTO THE CLASH. SEVERAL INDIAN WITNESSES WERE QUOTED BY REPORTERS TO THE EFFECT THAT SOME INDIAN LEADERS HAD THREATENED THE SOLDIERS, AND THAT ONLY AFTER ONE OR MORE OF THE SOLDIERS HAD RECEIVED MACHETE SLASHES DID THE OTHER SOLDIERS START SHOOTING. SOME LADINO (NON-INDIAN) WITNESSES OFFERED A SIMILAR VERSION. A PAID AD BY PRIESTS AND NUNS OF ALTA VERAPAZ, WHICH IS OTHERWISE HIGHLY CRITICAL OF THE GOVERNMENT, ALSO ACKNOWLEDGES THAT A CAMPESINO STRUCK THE FIRST BLOW. (HE APPARENTLY BELIEVED HE HAD BEEN INSULTED.) THE PERMANENT COUNCIL OF THE GUATEMALAN BISHOPS CONFERENCE LAMENTED THE VIOLENCE, "THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF WHICH ARE NOT COMPLETELY CLEAR." IT ALSO CALLED FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO MAKE A COMPLETE INVESTIGATION OF THE FACTS AND THE REAL CAUSES.

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PAGE 03 GUATEM 03273 052242Z

3. VICE PRESIDENT-ELECT VILLAGRAN KRAMER GAVE A FORMAL STATEMENT TO THE PRESS ON HIS "HASTY" RETURN JUNE 3 FROM THE UNITED STATES. HE CALLED PANZOS AN "INDIAN UPRISING" TO BE ADDED TO THE LIST BEGINNING WITH PATZIZIA IN 1944 (WHEN INDIANS MASSACRED LADINOS ON REPORTS, SPREAD BY A FALLING GOVERNMENT, THAT REVOLUTIONARIES PLANNED TO REDISTRIBUTE THEIR LANDS). HE CALLED FOR ACTION TO RELIEVE THE DESPERATION OF THE INDIANS, POINTED OUT THAT PRESIDENT-ELECT LUCAS "IDENTIFIED WITH THE INDIAN, ESPECIALLY THE KEKCHI," AND IMPLICITLY CRITICIZED THE LAND DISTRIBUTION PRACTICES OF THE LAUGERUD ADMINISTRATION. ANDREWS

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